



TAIWAN FOUNDATION
for DEMOCRACY

財團法人臺灣民主基金會

November 5th, 2014

Centre for Human Rights and Development Wins the 2014 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy announced today that the winner of 2014 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD) of Sri Lanka. CHRD is a leading Sri Lankan human rights organization established in 1997 by human rights lawyers and activists. CHRD aims to protect and promote human rights development and has long been engaging in defending human rights in Sri Lanka. It is also considered a source of legal support and strategic guidance for minorities, the disadvantaged and grassroots human rights organizations. Despite intense surveillance and being branded traitors by the government, CHRD works tirelessly still to defend marginalized segments of society and expose the government's undemocratic ways.

CHRD is managing the habeas corpus case filed by Ms. Ananthi Sasitharan and five other women demanding to know the whereabouts of family members who disappeared after surrendering to the army in 2009. This hugely contentious landmark case is still ongoing, but its very existence is encouraging many other relatives of the disappeared to come forward.

In April 2012, Tamil minority communities in the eastern province were subjected to widespread arbitrary detention by military. CHRD rapidly responded by conducting a fact-finding mission, providing legal counsel to families, visiting detainees in prison and by organizing a secure meeting for community-based organizations to speak directly with foreign embassy staff about the impact of these arbitrary arrests on communities. Nearly all of the three hundred individuals that were

arrested were subsequently released.

Over recent years, Sri Lankan human rights defenders have been killed, disappeared, imprisoned or have fled the country to live in exile. Mr. Kanagasabai Shanmugaratnam Ratnavale, Executive Director of CHRDR, has served as a human rights lawyer since 1979 and remained as a beacon of hope, one of the few lawyers willing to take on high profile cases featuring human rights defenders and those that tackle sensitive issues such as sexual violence and abduction by military personnel, and to criticize the government. Recent high profile examples of CHRDR's leadership can be seen in its legal representation and public campaigning on behalf of detained human rights activists Ruki Fernando, Father Praveen Mahesan, Ms. Balendran Jeyakumari, etc. CHRDR addresses human rights issues with a multi-faceted approach that includes litigation, public campaign, research and documentation, advocacy, legal and human rights education and network building. They aim to strengthen and make more effective the movement for human rights in Sri Lanka as a whole.

CHRDR was chosen after a two-stage reviewing process. The final review panel included Dr. Nisuke Ando, Director of the Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute and former Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee; Mr. Paul Graham, Chair of the International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies NGO Process; Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the 2008 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award laureate; Dr. Carolina Hernandez, Professor of Political Science at the University of the Philippines and President of Institute of Strategic and Development Studies, Inc.; Ms Asma Jahangir, Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; TFD Chairman Wang Jin-Pyng, and Dr. Teh-Fu Huang, President of the TFD.

CHRDR will formally receive the 2014 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award at a ceremony in Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel Taipei on December 10th, the International Human Rights Day. The Award consists of one sculpture and a US\$100,000 grant to support CHRDR for their ongoing works to promote and protect human rights.

Media Contact:

Email: award@tfd.org.tw

Tel: +886-2-2708-0100 #705 Ms. Hung-Ya Lien

Fax: +886-2-2708-0828

For more information about the Award, please visit:

<http://www.tfd.org.tw/opencms/english/adhra/index.html>